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U.S. Government contributes an additional \$15 million in emergency food aid for Sri Lanka

Colombo – April 02, 2009: The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has donated \$15 million (Rs 1.7 billion) worth of vital food aid for Sri Lanka to the United Nations World Food Program (WFP). The food, consisting of wheat, lentils and vegetable oil, will be distributed to a large number of displaced and conflict-affected people in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.

USAID, the development agency of the U.S. Government, announced that 19,490 MTs (metric tons) of emergency food relief will be used to support WFP activities in the North and East. The USAID donation will include 14,700 MTs of wheat, 3,750 MTs of lentils, and 1,040 MTs of vegetable oil, enough to provide essential food to 300,000 people over four months. The food aid is scheduled to arrive in June 2009.

"USAID is pleased to support WFP's efforts to provide emergency food aid to Sri Lankans who are severely affected by the conflict," stated USAID Mission Director Rebecca Cohn. "Our donation represents about 21% of the total food aid that WFP has called for this year to meet the needs of IDPs and other conflict-affected people in Sri Lanka. We know that our donation will help WFP provide food aid that benefits people in need in the North and East," she continued.

USAID food is also providing a critical lifeline for thousands of civilians now trapped by fighting in the "No Fire Zone." She noted that approximately 65 percent of the WFP food currently going into the conflict area by ship is provided by USAID.

"WFP highly values this contribution, not only that it is most needed given the current IDP situation in the North, but also because it is most timely, given the status of our pipeline," said Mr. Adnan Khan, WFP Representative in Sri Lanka.

In 2008, USAID provided 28,393 MT of food relief valued at almost \$29 million (Rs 3.303 billion).

By focusing on emergency relief requirements and potential returns by IDPs to their homes, USAID's donation supports the WFP Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) titled "Food for Peacebuilding and Recovery in Conflict-Affected Areas." The WFP PRRO assists the Government of Sri Lanka in feeding 1.1 million people through emergency feeding and recovery programs including food-for-education, food-for-work, and mother-and-child health and nutrition.

WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency and the UN's frontline agency for hunger solutions. In 2009, WFP aims to feed around 100 million people in 77 countries.

The American people, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, have provided development and humanitarian assistance in developing countries worldwide for nearly 50 years. Since 1956, USAID/Sri Lanka has invested nearly \$2 billion to benefit all the people of Sri Lanka.

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In January 2009, Disaster Relief Services Minister Rishad Bathiudeen (left) and U.S. Ambassador Robert Blake viewed USAID food donations to the World Food Program.